

Initiative 5: Empowering individuals and families to build healthy lives and achieve social and economic success

Well-functioning families are the foundation of healthy communities. These families protect and nurture their members while teaching their children how to become thriving and contributing members of society. Families vary in structure, age, income, and other characteristics. Strong families foster the health, well-being, and financial security of all Florida communities.

Lifestyle-related illness and chronic disease lead to a poor quality of life and an increased economic burden on families, communities, and government. Floridians struggle with high rates of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and other chronic diseases. These health problems have grown considerably during the last few decades, and they are especially prevalent among low income families and ethnic minorities. Florida Extension programs must focus on creating lifestyle behavior changes related to nutrition and health, food safety, and physical activity.

Diverse family structures and underserved groups, such as teenage parents, single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, cohabiting couples, dual-earner families, military families, aging adults, and caregiving families, are increasing in Florida. Poverty, social isolation, parental substance abuse and addiction, stress, child abuse, domestic violence, and marital instability are major challenges. In addition, many Florida families are concerned with housing issues, caregiving decisions, and stress caused by caring for an aging relative. Potential hurricanes and other natural disasters present additional challenges for families. Florida Extension programs must assist Florida's diverse families to better understand healthy growth and development in children and help them improve individual and family function and well-being.

Floridians are experiencing a sustained period of economic challenge. Tens of thousands are outside the financial mainstream, lacking access to many key services needed for economic success. Affordable housing, foreclosure, home maintenance, and energy costs are also pressing challenges for Floridians. Florida Extension can improve economic viability for low- and middle-income families, senior citizens, immigrant families, social service providers, and teachers through comprehensive financial management training programs.

P1 – Food Safety and Nutrition

Improve Floridians' food choices and ability to handle food safely by providing education and intervention for consumers, families, and food handlers.

P2 – Housing

Improve Floridians' access to affordable housing (purchase and finances) and teach owners and renters how to operate and maintain their homes.

P3 – Family Financial Management

Improve individual and family financial stability by teaching Floridians about knowledge and behavior aspects of money management.

P4 – Aging Well

Improve the lifestyle of older Floridians by educating individuals, families, and communities about aging-related issues.

P5 – Human Development and Family Relationships

Empower individuals to make positive lifestyle choices that improve physical and mental health, strengthen relationships, and improve parenting and child care.